

## **The History of Brenton Farm** **Hanna Edge du Toit**

The early history of the Brenton farm is shadowed by the mists of time, and none of the references quoted here agree exactly. Maybe David Metelerkamp's version as written in 'The Ganzvlei Story' is the most accurate.

The first (white) settler in the Knysna area was Stefanus (or maybe Solomon) Terblans, who was granted grazing rights to Melkhoutkraal, on the northern side of the Knysna lagoon, in 1770. His brother, Pieter, was granted rights to the farm Buffelsvermaak, on the eastern side of the Goukamma river in 1774. Buffelsvermaak was divided in 1775 and Hendrik Barnard was granted the rights to the portion called Uitzicht (the current Brenton peninsula) in 1775. Hendrik Barnard became Pieter Terblans's son in law in 1800. (*Metelerkamp – pg 15*). Uitzicht's boundaries were Buffelsvermaak, the present day Westford, and the Knysna lagoon. Another version is that Uitzicht belonged to Solomon Terblans who sold it to Hendrik Barnard for 'an oxwagon and a span of oxen' (*Exploring Knysna's Historical Countryside*)

George Rex bought Uitzicht in 1830 from Barnard's deceased estate and thereby became the owner of all the land around the Knysna Lagoon. Rex then sold Uitzicht to his son in law Lieutenant Thomas Duthie in 1834 who changed the name to Belvidere, Uitzicht meaning 'view' in Dutch. Belvidere, however, seems to only refer to the part that is the current Belvidere, whereas the rest of the area remained Uitzicht. (*Exploring Knysna's Historical Countryside*) It also seems that name of the original Uitzicht farm was never officially changed to Belvidere or Brenton, as the properties on the Brenton peninsula are still officially known as Portion xxx of Farm Uizicht 216.

After Thomas Duthie died in 1857 the farm was divided between his two sons. John James (1845 – 1921) received the Uitzicht part and called it Brenton. George Rex Duthie received Belvidere. The history of Belvidere is very well documented elsewhere.

John built the first house on the Brenton property, apparently halfway down the road to Lake Brenton, on the right hand side, approximately where the bend is, going down to Capt. WA Duthie Avenue. This house was later demolished and nothing remains of it today. John Duthie's son Walter (birthdate unknown) built a second house at the bottom of the hill to the right of the jetty, but again nothing remains of that house either. (*Exploring page 2*). John farmed with cattle, poultry and vegetables as well as with ostriches during the ostrich boom in the late nineteenth century (more about them later). (*More Memories – page 163*)

John's other son, George Rex Duthie (1889 – 1962) lived in the original house with his family while Walter and his family occupied the house lower down. Walter continued to farm but George worked at the Thesen's boat building concern, eventually as managing director.

There was no road to Brenton and the only way to get to Knysna was across the lagoon, first with rowing boats and later with motorboats. George Duthie had a clinker boat with a 2.5 horsepower engine and motored across the lagoon every day to the Thesen factory. His wife, Lucy (1910 – 1993), used to run across the railway bridge to play tennis in town until her first child was born. She then persuaded her husband, George, to build her a similar boat to his, with which she motored across the lagoon to the Yacht Club to go shopping. The children were weekly boarders in Knysna to enable them to attend school and were taken across every Monday morning and fetched every Friday afternoon. Basic foodstuffs such as flour and sugar arrived by train and was dropped off at the Brenton siding. Farmworkers fetched these by ox-drawn sleigh along the sandy track as there was no hard road. Apparently there were no wheeled vehicles on the farm, as they would only have got stuck in the sand. Sleighs were used instead. (*Mary van Eeden nee Duthie – Life at Brenton, More Memories of Knysna, page 163, 164*)

After WWII the Duthie's sold the Brenton estate, with the western headland being bought by JLB Smith of Coelecanth fame (*The Fishy Smiths – Mike Bruton*). The Brenton Ontwikkelingsmaatskappy (Brenton Development Corporation) bought some of the land and the townships of Brenton-on-Sea were laid out in 1957 and Brenton-on-Lake in 1966 respectively.

The South African Railways owned the caravan park and campsite at Brenton-on-Lake with rondawels and beautiful campsites under the magnificent yellowwood and other trees. (*Heads and Tails – David Wightman – page 43*)

The road to Brenton (another chapter) was only built in 1954 by the Divisional Council and tarred in 1971. (*Exploring*).

*Sources: Exploring Knysna's Historical Countryside – Margaret Parkes and VM Williams -1996*  
*More Memories of Knysna – Friends of the Knysna Libraries (Sue Allanson, Margaret Parkes, Vicky Williams) – 1996*  
*Still Waters and Green Pastures - The Ganzvlei Story – David Peter Metelerkamp – 2008 -downloaded*  
*Heads and Tails – David Wightman -1995*  
*The Fishy Smiths – Mike Bruton 2018*